

MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HURLOCK

Minutes of the Regular Session

JULY 12, 2010

Mayor Joyce A. Spratt and the Council of Hurlock met in regular session at 6:00 P.M. in the Town Hall on Monday, July 12, 2010. In attendance, in addition to Mayor Spratt, were Council President Charles Cephas, Council Members Christopher Adams, Michael Henry, Parker Durham, Michael Nordstrom, Clerk/Treasurer Kathleen Clough, Town Attorney Hugh Carter Vinson, Police Chief Ron Small, Code Enforcer John Avery, and Public Works Coordinator Tony Gilliard.

The Council and Citizens stood for the Pledge of Allegiance and an Invocation given by Council President Reverend Charles Cephas.

Councilman Michael Nordstrom made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Michael Henry, and unanimously approved.

Mayor Joyce Spratt announced in her report that trash will continue to be picked up twice a week. She explained that the Town has been paying for one-half the cost of dumpsters for local businesses, but due to the cost, as of September 1, 2010 the Town will no longer be subsidizing this portion. Some businesses have expressed that with the downturn in the economy and slow down in business they may be able to get by with trash totes rather than the dumpsters.

Mayor Spratt reported that a member of the community, Mr. William Harper, had been beaten and pistol-whipped by intruders and suggested neighbors and friends send cards to Mr. & Mrs. Harper to let them know we are thinking of them. Mr. Harper was recovering from his injuries after a brief stay in the hospital and the Sheriff's department is working diligently to apprehend the assailants.

Mayor Spratt stated that the Maryland Municipal League Convention was very valuable for her and each of the Council members who attended the classes and events. Councilman Henry said that there were many classes and they were very valuable to him. Councilman Adams reported that at the Eastern Shore Dinner, the Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot, used Hurlock as an example for how to do a budget and other matters of accountability to the public. Councilman Durham said it was wonderful, with many resources and classes and that it was a beneficial experience for him. Councilman Nordstrom added that the instructors were fantastic and they all learned a lot, and everyone seemed to have heard about Hurlock. He continued that it was great and all of the Council members brought back a lot of new knowledge.

In conclusion of her report, the Mayor informed the Council and the public that Hurlock is the only Town in Dorchester County that is paying the Workers' Compensation Insurance of nearly \$8,000.00 a year for their fire department. This was a decision made a number of years ago by the previous Mayor that was never brought before or approved by the Council. The County pays this bill for all other Towns. The Town of Hurlock is now working with the County Manager to join the other towns in the County to save Hurlock this duplicative expense that is already paid for by the citizens with their County taxes.

Draft minutes of previous Executive Session and the Department Reports were unanimously approved, and final minutes will be submitted for Council's review.

Department reports were given. It was reported that Family Dollar will hold on-site interviews and take applications in mid-August.

Police Chief Ron Small responded to Council President reverend Charles Cephas' inquiry regarding gangs, saying that he would contact the Sheriff's office, and that we have two new police officers at the Police Academy who will graduate in December. There have been eleven adult arrests and three juvenile arrests. Last month the Police Department wrote one hundred thirty citations and warnings.

The Clerk/Treasurer/Planning Report included the following:

1. Governor Martin O'Malley announced on July 15, 2010 that **the Town of Hurlock has been awarded the designation as an Enterprise Zone**. Since the announcement was made in media statewide, the Town has received numerous inquiries regarding available land.
2. The Governor's office of Crime Control & Prevention (GOCCP) has awarded the Hurlock Police Department a **School Bus Safety Enforcement Fund Grant in the amount of \$5,500** for July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.
3. On Tuesday, July 27, 2010 John Avery, Code Enforcer, and I will meet with Kevin Wagner of MDE for a Community Assistance Visit (CAV) to discuss the Town of Hurlock's participation in the national Flood Insurance program (NFIP) to assess, among other things, the effectiveness of local flood plain management ordinances and enforcement practices and our community's need for technical assistance and coordination.

4. After a meeting with the Maryland Rural Water Association and the Governor's Eastern Shore representative in May, we applied for a grant of \$25,000 to fund the Preparation of a Preliminary Engineering Report to Address Storm Drainage Problems within the Town of Hurlock. The United States Department of Agriculture SDA/RUS **has awarded the Town \$15,000 in federal funding and \$5,000 in other funding.** This money will be available to us for a period of three years. The Maryland Department of Planning issued a letter to mayor Spratt July 2, 2010 outlining all of the State Agencies that reviewed the request and found it to be consistent with State Plans, Programs and Objectives.
5. A request for copies of Executive Session Minutes was made last week. By law, executive session minutes may be released after the reason for an executive session being held no longer applies, and the Council has voted to unseal those minutes. For example, a negotiation regarding a land purchase that could be affected by publicity is one of the allowed exemptions; but once the property has been purchased, the justification for secrecy would not continue. At this time, all of the topics discussed in Executive Session from January 2010 to June 2010 are new issues to this administration and council and have not been finalized, and therefore would not have come before the council for a vote to unseal those records.
6. In March the Town's Insurance Brokers notified us that the premiums would be increasing approximately 27% resulting in a new premium of well over a half a million dollars. This increase of over \$130,000 was not budgeted, and on top of other losses of revenues, the Town was not able to meet this expense.
In analyzing options, it was determined that there were some families of both current and former employees who were double insured, some through a spouse's County employment, costing the taxpayers of Hurlock to pay twice for insurance coverage for these families through their Hurlock taxes and County taxes. In other cases, a spouse may have been eligible for coverage through their own employer, but because Hurlock pays 100% plus all deductibles at 100%, the family would naturally choose to be insured through the Town of Hurlock. This is true for active and non-active, former employees and Council members, even if they had worked only part-time for the Town, for the rest of their life, and their dependent's lives. While the Town of Hurlock continues to be a responsible and family oriented employer, in this economy, the previous level of benefits places too great a burden on an already over-taxed community. It was the goal of the Administration to get through this economic crisis without having to layoff or furlough employees, and to strengthen the police department to attempt to get control of the rampant drug problem, breaking and entering, and assaults, before the summer months when these problems have historically seen a dramatic increase. It also makes sense to have families have a stake in their health care and coverage. The Town continues to cover employees at 100% and their families at 75%.
7. Family Dollar is getting closer to completion – estimated opening is late August.
8. Local Issues:
 - a. Complaints about "Reserved Parking" signs for Mayor.
In response to these complaints about the Mayor having a reserved parking space, I would like to explain that were a personal Birthday gift to Mayor Spratt that were purchased and installed without her knowledge while she was away in Alaska. Mayor Spratt sustained an injury, along with a number of other people, when they fell on the nuts that covered the parking lot last spring. (This was why the tree was taken down; it was a serious liability for the Town should someone file a claim). Mayor Spratt continues to have difficulty from that fall and parking closer to the curb is a small consideration. It means that someone who wanted to park there, rather than in the next space next to it, will now have to walk an additional nine feet.
 - b. Shopping local.
On July 15, 2010, Governor Martin O'Malley will Kick-off the "Buy Local Challenge"
According to the Governor, buying locally is key to ensuring a smart, green and growing future for Maryland families. It preserves farmland, protects the environment, and bolsters local economies. Mayor Spratt ran on a platform of supporting local businesses and keeping Hurlock tax dollars in Hurlock for the benefit of the local townspeople.

OLD BUSINESS: Councilman Michael Henry made a motion to award the job for replacement of the Old Library Roof to Mr. E. Ramos, MHIC License Number 45713 in the amount of \$6,700. The motion was seconded by Councilman Christopher Adams. The motion passed 4-1 with Councilman Charles Cephas abstaining.

Council President Charles Cephas made a motion to continue the contract for Town trash pick-up with Chesapeake waste, Inc., with a caveat in the contract that should the Town decide to purchase a truck and do its own trash pick-up, the contract will become null and void. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Nordstrom and passed unanimously.

Mr. Earl Murphy gave an update on Hurlock Events, and reminded all that the upcoming Crab Feast on July 31st at 6:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. would be the only fundraiser for the Christmas Parade. Tickets are \$35.00 for hot, steamed right in front of your eyes, crabs, with music and dancing. Mr. Murphy also announced that the Hurlock Fall Festival is not just the First Saturday of October, but on Friday night there will be a local author signing books at the Train Station and giving a ghost Tour, people can take carriage rides. There will be the traditional Train Rides at the fall Festival as well as at the Christmas Parade, and the committee is looking for volunteers for all of these events.

NEW BUSINESS: A Proposed Ordinance was presented for the Council's consideration:

"AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT CURRENT STATE OF MARYLAND BUILDING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS THAT SHALL CONTROL ALL MATTERS CONCERNING OR CONNECTED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION, ALTERATION, ADDITION, REPAIR, REMOVAL, DEMOLITION, USE, LOCATION, AND/OR OCCUPANCY OF ALL BUILDINGS WITHIN THE TOWN OF HURLOCK. "

COUNCIL MEMBERS' REMARKS:

Councilman Christopher Adams thanked the people for the opportunity to attend the Maryland Municipal League convention, saying it was money well spent and he learned a lot.

Councilman Parker Durham thanked Earl Murphy for taking the lead in organizing the Christmas Parade, and asked the people to get out and enjoy their Town. He asked the people to join together and attend the Shorebirds game, and stated that the Maryland Municipal league Convention was a wonderful educational experience that will pay dividends.

Councilman Michael Henry agreed and emphasized the same thoughts.

Councilman Michael Nordstrom said the Horseshoe Tournament is for everyone and he hopes all who are able will attend.

OPEN FORUM:

Monroe Quails said he applauded everyone on the Council speaks highly of MML; it is good to have a contact, but questioned how it could be such a bad thing once and now it is such a good thing.

Council President Cephas said it was indispensable for the council. Councilman Christopher Adams stated that he wants to have a "Main Street" Booth for Hurlock next year.

It was announced that there will be a car wash on Saturday from 10:00 A.M to 2:00 P.M. in Preston for National Awareness Month to benefit the Fraternal Order of Police, Dorchester county Lodge.

A citizen asked for clarification on a \$200,000 loan from the previous administration on which only interest has been paid for seven years. Mayor Spratt explained that after the election she was called and asked to come to the bank to meet with the manager and was informed that no money had been paid toward the principal. The bank manager explained that they were told every year that there was grant money coming to pay it off, however that money never materialized, and the new administration will have to budget the funds to start paying down the loan.

Council President Cephas said that we must look to the future; this Council will leave no stone unturned; everything will surface as to what it is here.

Mayor Spratt stated "we are stewards of your money."

Cedric Turner stated that transparency was why he asked for expenditures at the last meeting. He asked "Where does the Town buy its supplies? Isn't buying lumber from the local lumber yard a conflict of interest?"

Jack Lewis addressed the Drinking Water Quality Report and the Maryland Drinking Water Program.

Council President Cephas addressed Police Chief Small stating that he is concerned that these young men doing home invasions will take someone's life. He stated "I want to send a message to these thugs taking money to 'get a job.' " I am so afraid a senior citizen or young person will be seriously injured. These guys are getting away with it and the violence will come to you and they are very clever."

Chief Small responded that Mr. Harper's home invasion and assault is being aggressively investigated and hopes are that the individuals will be apprehended soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen L. Clough
Clerk /Treasurer

ATTEST:

Joyce A. Spratt, Mayor

July 27, 2010
Date